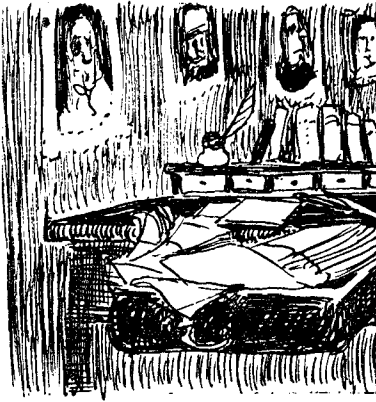


# A Portrait of Victor Serge



VICTOR SERGE, WHO WAS BORN IN 1890 and died in 1947, was an anarchist, a Bolshevik, a Trotskyist, a revisionist-Marxist, and, on his own confession, a "personalist." Belgian by place of birth and upbringing, French by adoption and in literary expression, Russian by parentage and later by citizenship, he eventually became stateless and was put down as a Spanish national for purposes of his funeral documents. He was a journalist, a poet, a pamphleteer, a historian, an agitator, and a novelist. Usually he was several of these things at once; there were few times in his life when he did not combine at least two or three

nationalities, ideologies, and professional callings. Nevertheless, although there is no way of describing him in brief without an inventory of discordances, he was very much an integral man. To read his memoirs is to receive the impression of a strong and consistent personality, of an approach to life and to politics which is complex but unified, of a heart which, however it may be divided, is so because reality tears it asunder, not because its loyalties are confused. When we list the varying political trends that entered into Victor Serge's make-up, we are simply recording his continual sensitivity to certain perennial dilemmas of action. Serge hated violence, but he saw it, at times, as constituting the lesser evil. He believed that necessity in politics might sometimes be frightful, but was necessity no less; only he was not inclined to glorify it into a virtue. He mistrusted the State, but he recognized it as an inevitable form in the progress of society. So general a statement of political predicaments is doubtless banal, but it is in fact rather rare to find a public figure (let alone a revolutionary public figure) who plainly registers both extremes of a dilemma with equal sensitivity, even though his ultimate choice may incline very definitely towards one pole or the other.

An appreciation of the complexity of political choice probably does not conduce to effective Left-wing theory or leadership. The improvising politician, concerned above all to seek the key to social transformation, has almost of necessity to over-emphasize some features of social reality at the expense of others. But the revolutionary of mixed origins and impulsion may well make a very good *witness* to the great upheavals of his

time. Standing at the confluence of several radical traditions, he will be able to judge the programs, actions, and ideas of the competing parties with a certain detachment; and yet his detachment will not be of the uncomprehending, noncommittal kind which would make it impossible to describe the revolution at all, except perhaps as a sequence of despotic acts. To the era consequent upon the 1917 Revolution, with its opening and continuing phases of mass violence, terror, and degeneracy, Serge brings a mind already matured in the experience of heroism and its corruption. When he entered the service of the Revolution, at the age of twenty-eight, he had behind him several years of disgust with the commercialized Social-Democracy of Belgium, three years of mounting disillusionment with anarchist terrorism, and five years' unspeakable existence as a convict among convicts. Steeped in the "individualist" psychology of his libertarian past, he retained an intense and wary consciousness of the many-sidedness of human motivation, of man's potential both for Titanic endeavor and for regression to the brute.

In the writings of Serge particular political tendencies stand displayed as the expression of moral and psychological resources within the individual. Not Marxism or reformism, Stalinism or liberalism are primary, but will, fear, sensitivity, dishonesty, courage, mental rigidity, psychic dynamism, and their opposites or absences. Serge tells you that a certain man is an obsessive, or that he leans too much upon favor, and this information is intended to mean quite as much as the facts about his party alignment; indeed, the political characterization is perhaps causally dependent on the more personal one. Serge often manages his evocation of the person by means of physiognomic detail: how this face was puffed, that one solid-looking, how certain eyes were gentle, or harsh, or firm. On his return from Western Europe, in 1936, Serge drew a long train of political conclusions (which stood the test of time considerably better than the more catastrophic expectations of his comrades) from one simple anatomic observation: that the Belgians were now *fat*.

And yet Serge's concern for human beings is by no means the same type of concern that a non-political writer would display, confronted by the same personages. Although Serge's portraits of political characters are rounded, nuanced, and humane, he is all the time seeing and selecting their traits from a specifically revolutionary standpoint; basically he is asking himself, "Is this man the kind of person who will help to make the revolution? Or will he perhaps help to make the wrong kind of revolution?" Toward the end of the *Memoirs* Serge remarks that one of the greatest problems in politics is that of reconciling "intransigence," which he thought indispensable to any worthwhile convictions, with the necessary principles of criticism towards ideas and respect towards men. It is Victor Serge's rare merit as a revolutionary witness to have fused intransigence with love.

THE FORCEFUL INDEPENDENCE OF SERGE'S VISION of political processes may be traced back to a very early stage in his Bolshevik career. In August 1921 a French Socialist publisher brought out a little book by Serge under the title *Les Anarchistes et L'Expérience de La Révolution Russe*.

In it we find, sometimes in rudimentary but often in quite developed form, all the basic concepts deployed by Serge in his later analyses of the Red dictatorship and its totalitarian leanings. Fundamental to his critique is a distinction between the avoidable and the unavoidable aspects of degeneration in revolutions. Unlike most other supporters of Bolshevism, he does not idealize the existing regimentation, or deny it for what it is. "The proletarian dictatorship has, in Russia, had to introduce an increasingly authoritarian centralism. One may perhaps deplore it. Unfortunately I do not believe that it could have been avoided." However, the role of necessity must not be invoked as an unrestricted excuse licensing any conceivable measure of despotism: "the rise of a Jacobin Party and its exclusive dictatorship do not then appear to be inevitable; and at this point everything depends on the ideas which inspire the party, on the men who carry out these ideas, and on the reality of control by the masses." What is more, "Every revolutionary government is by its very nature conservative and therefore retrograde. Power exercises upon those who hold it a baleful influence which is often expressed in deplorable occupational perversions." (p. 34; cf *Memoirs* p. 99.) The State, which is an effective "killing-machine" in the military sense, is less efficient in the regulation of production: "One of the troubles of Red Russia is precisely that she has failed to avoid the almost total Statification of production."

All the greater, therefore, was the responsibility of free-thinking revolutionaries: "It will be the task of libertarian Communists to proclaim by their criticism and activity that the crystallization of the worker's State must be avoided at all costs." The solution to the problem of all-embracing State ownership must be "production to the producers, that is to the trade unions," even though this policy holds the danger that the unions will themselves turn into a new State bureaucracy. Anarchism is vindicated in its proclamation of "the terrible harm residing in authority, the harmfulness of Statism and authoritarian centralism." (*ibid.*). Indeed, in the very successes of the Revolution "little credit is due to authority. Many things have been achieved in spite of it"; here Serge seems to prefigure his later emphasis on the economic disadvantages of Stalinism (cf *Memoirs* p. 378). All the same, anarchists must be "with the Revolution, unhesitating and ubiquitous, or they will be nothing." They will be Communists, but "in contradiction to numerous others they will strive to preserve the spirit of freedom, and so will be gifted with a more critical approach and a sharper awareness of ultimate ends. Within any Communist movement their lucidity will make them the most formidable enemies of the climbers, the budding politicians and commissars, the formalists, pundits and intriguers."

The circumstances surrounding this essay themselves form a striking testimony to Serge's insistence in the *Memoirs* on the comparatively tolerant spirit of which the Bolsheviks were capable. Serge wrote it in Petrograd in the summer of 1920, having already spent over a year at Zinoviev's side in the administrative work of the Communist International. He was living in the principal hotel for Party functionaries, the Astoria, next door to Bakayev and Yevdokimov. *Les Anarchistes et L'Expérience de la Révolution Russe* was prepared for publication in the June

of 1921 and published two months later; the bloody suppression of the Kronstadt mutiny, the outlawing of the Workers' Opposition as an "anarcho-syndicalist deviation" and the banning of Party factions had all taken place earlier in the year. Nevertheless, the publication of Serge's anti-Statist, semi-anarchist and pro-syndicalist booklet seems to have made no difference to his position in the Party. This was not Serge's only indiscretion in that year. Yet, after it all, he could still be entrusted with an important confidential mission in the Comintern network abroad, performing conspiratorial duties in preparation of the apparently imminent German revolution. Serge does not seem to have regarded this mission as constituting some kind of demotion or banishment. The fraternal climate within Bolshevism was still such that a deviationist could be trusted.

OVER THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OR SO considerable controversy has waxed over the question: is Stalinism the logical, organic, and inevitable continuation of Bolshevism? Most Western observers have replied with a simple affirmative; and an equation of similar form, but with the signs of all quantities reversed from negative to positive, was propounded until quite recently by political algebraists within the Soviet sphere of influence. On the other hand, the Trotskyist school of Marxism has long insisted that Stalinism is the direct negation of Bolshevism, while official Soviet theory after 1956 has increasingly tended to posit much the same kind of polar opposition between "Leninist norms" and at least some of the "excesses, abuses, and crimes" of Stalin's day. Victor Serge's answer to the problem was persistently double-sided. As against Trotsky and his followers he stresses the fatal rigidities and ambiguities of Leninist and Marxist doctrine, and the sources of degeneracy in such early Soviet institutions as the Cheka. As against the pairing of Bolshevism with Stalinism, he simply describes what, in his experience, Bolsheviks and Stalinists were like, and details the severe limitations set upon a free development of Soviet Socialism by the Civil War and its aftermath of havoc. Serge was suspicious of any notion tending to establish historical fatalism, and this set him both against the easy appeal to necessity which Leninists and Stalinists employed in their apologies of butchery, and against the common Western habit of regarding the degeneration of revolutions into tyranny as virtually the only Iron Law which it is still permissible to detect within history. One locus in Serge's polemical writings is particularly worth citing in this respect.<sup>1</sup> In 1938 and 1939 Trotskyist and libertarian circles were hotly involved in debating the nature of the Kronstadt rising of 1921, whose ruthless liquidation by the Bolsheviks lent itself to obvious comparison with the ongoing Great Purge. Serge entered into combat both with Trotsky, who had no qualms at all about the Bolshevik treatment to the mutineers, and with a Yugoslav ex-Trotskyist, Anton Ciliga, who saw the Kronstadt rising as a proletarian revolution against the bureaucracy, and its suppression as a proof of the linear decent of Stalin's Party from Lenin's. Trotsky had brusquely dismissed Serge's earlier reminiscences of the Kronstadt massacres: "Whether there were any needless victims I do not know. On

1. *New International*, February 1939, pp. 53-4.

this score I trust Dzerzhinsky more than his belated critics. . . . Victor Serge's conclusions on this score—from third hand—have no value in my eyes.” Serge retorted that his information on Kronstadt came from anarchist eyewitnesses he had interviewed in prison immediately after the rising; whereas Dzerzhinsky's conclusions were “from seventh or ninth hand,” the head of the Cheka having been absent from Petrograd at the time. “The single fact that a Trotsky did not know what all the rank and file Communists knew—that out of inhumanity a needless crime had been committed against the proletariat and peasantry—this fact, I repeat, is deeply significant. . . .”

On the other hand, Serge maintained against Ciliga that the socio-political composition of the non-Party masses at the time of Kronstadt was very far from progressive. “In 1921, everybody who aspires to Socialism is inside the Party. . . . It is the non-party workers of this epoch, joining the party to the number of 2,000,000 in 1924, upon the death of Lenin, who assure the victory of its bureaucracy.” The conscious revolutionaries in the leadership of the mutiny “constituted an undeniable élite and, duped by their own passion, they opened in spite of themselves the door to a frightful counterrevolution.” Serge's comment on the general issue in question could well be taken as a summing up of his lifelong attitude to the Revolution: “It is often said that ‘the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at its beginning.’ Well, I have no objection. Only, Bolshevism also contained many other germs—a mass of other germs—and those who lived through the enthusiasm of the first years of the first victorious revolution ought not to forget it. To judge the living man by the death germs which the autopsy reveals in a corpse—and which he may have carried in him since his birth—is this very sensible?”



IN ONE SENSE THE POLITICAL CAREER of Victor Serge terminated with the demise of the European Left after the fall of France in 1940.<sup>2</sup> He was never again able to participate in any social movement with a recognizable influence upon public events. The last six or seven years of his life passed in virtual political solitude; his refugee status forbade any intervention by him in Mexican affairs, and he could find no wider international audience to hear him out. Nonetheless, Serge never at any stage retired from his vocation as a revolutionary writer. He went on writing his fine novel on the Purges during the rout of France, in the fugitives' warren of Marseilles, and on the troubled voyage that took him to his

2. Except where otherwise stated, the material for the following outline of Serge's last years is drawn from Julián Gorkin's invaluable appendix to the 1957 edition of the *Memoirs*, from Serge's published notebooks, or from his letters to Antonie Borie. Biographical details will be given in the English translation of the *Memoirs*.

final asylum. Once in Mexico, he wrote without respite: novels, essays, poems, articles, biography and autobiography. Anxious to keep abreast of the major social and cultural developments of the time, he devoured every significant book, periodical or journal that he chanced on, in Russian, French, Spanish, German, or English.

He worked on, sometimes with a haunting sense that his faculties might be weakening through the sheer vacuity that surrounded him. "Terribly difficult," he notes, "to create in the void, lacking the least support, the least real environment." He speaks of "writing for the desk-drawer alone, past the age of fifty, unable to exclude the hypothesis that the tyrannies will outlast the remainder of my life . . . ;" and "I am beginning to wonder if my very name will not be an obstacle to the novel's publication."

This oppressive sense of failure was not without its foundation in recent experience. As soon as Serge arrived in Mexico he paid the familiar penalty for his clairvoyance. His book on the Nazi aggression against Russia (*Hitler Contra Stalin*) proved to be too frank for the public taste, since it predicted disastrous Soviet reverses in the early stages of the war, with the peasant actually welcoming Hitler's invaders. As a result, the small firm that had published the book expired in ruin. Serge's dark forecasts turned out, of course, to be perfectly accurate. Public meetings addressed by Serge, Gorkin, and others from their circle were brutally assailed by Communist groups, on one occasion by an armed gang of 200 men. Several times he and his friends had to go into hiding. At his lodgings, which he seldom left if he could help it, he had a spy-hole cut into the front door so that he could identify callers before opening to them. The danger was not always so bluntly physical. A protracted barrage of slander was directed against Serge and his circle by the many organs of the Mexican press influenced by the Communists and their powerful associates (such as the trade-union leader Lombardo Toledano). The strong German Stalinist emigration (*Freies Deutschland*), including such veteran propagandists as André Simone (Katz) and Paul Merker, added their quota of venom to the campaign.<sup>3</sup> Serge's friends were Socialist militants of long standing like Marceau Pivert, the leader of the pre-war French Socialist Left, Gustav Regler, lately a political commissar with the International Brigades in Spain; Julián Gorkin, the former international secretary of the independent Marxist party P.O.U.M.; and other Spanish comrades of that complexion. One by one, Mexican publications closed their columns to this obscure band of troublesome foreigners. The editor of one weekly which still admitted Gorkin as its foreign editor, and Serge as a contributor, was called in to see Miguel Alemán, the Minister of the Interior and future President of the Republic; there he was informed that the Soviet and British Ambassadors were pressing the Mexican Government to withdraw from Serge and Gorkin all public means of expression. Although the editor refused

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3. Some of the slanderers were subsequently themselves targets for the same type of treatment. In January 1953 Paul Merker was accused by the East German régime of having, during his Mexican exile, made *Freies Deutschland* into a 'propaganda journal for Zionist ideas'; he and his old collaborators Jungmann were arrested and imprisoned. This purge was conducted as part of 'the lessons of the Prague Trials' of November 1952, as a result of which Simone-Katz was hanged as a British Intelligence agent, allegedly recruited by Noël Coward in 1939.



to accede, his journal afterwards acquired a new management enjoying the favor of the Soviet Embassy, and he, Gorkin, and Serge were all unceremoniously ousted. The boycott was now total and Serge found it increasingly hard to keep body and soul together. Only one more book of his saw print during his life, a novel published in Canada and (in translation) in the United States. He tried in vain to get the *Memoirs* published in the U.S.A. "In every publishing-house," he bitterly concluded, "there is at least one conservative and two Stalinists; and nobody has the slightest understanding of the life of a European militant." He died penniless, and his friends had to make a collection among themselves to pay the expenses of his burial.

The estrangements and dissensions typical of *émigré* political groups bore particularly heavily upon Serge. Within the independent Socialist colony he was the only member with a specifically Bolshevik background. His collaboration with Socialists from other traditions was warm and unstinted, but we can gain some inkling of a certain isolation that he felt, to judge from a note he entered in his diary in mid-January 1944. Here he records his pleasure at the resumption of friendly relations with Trotsky's widow Natalya, noting how they, "the sole survivors of the Russian Revolution here and perhaps anywhere in the world, used to be separated so completely by sectarianism; and this was not like the human spirit of the real Bolsheviks . . ." He reflects that Natalya is going to be pained by certain anti-Trotskyist observations in a book which he had just brought out in co-authorship with his friends; "she will perhaps not realize my solitude in these collaborations." He concludes sadly, "There is nobody left who knows what the Russian Revolution was really like, what the Bolsheviks were really like—and men judge without knowing, with bitterness and basic rigidity."

Yet in other respects Serge was far too much of a revisionist for his more traditional Marxist comrades, many of whom were nursing hopes for their post-war return to the Old World on the crest of a European Revolution. Serge had no such hopes. For him the Second World War was a "war of social transformation" (and not simply a classical imperialist war as nearly all his comrades thought), ushering in an era of controlled and planned economies that would, under the conditions of post-war reconstruction, burst the fetters of capitalist private property even in the absence of proletarian upheavals. "European big capital, weakened and discredited by the war it has brought, will find itself in *opposition* to the growth of production and the common good, *now in clear evidence*."<sup>4</sup> Serge believed that this inevitable collectivist transformation would have a marked totalitarian bias, which could, however, be largely counteracted by class struggle on the political level. Parliaments, municipalities, trade unions, and workers' councils offered a possible focus for this countervailing influence by the masses. Serge maintained this perspective well after the war: "I wonder if some kind of collectivism, quasi-totalitarian but *enlightened*, guaranteeing the human rights that have been acquired over several centuries, will not eventually establish itself for the reconstruction of the old continent; such a system

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4. Unpublished MS., *Economie Dirigée et Démocratie* (no date).

I would find acceptable if it were directed by technicians and effectively controlled by the masses.”<sup>5</sup>

So pessimistic an outlook, based (despite its undoubted insights) upon speculative impressionism rather than on any thorough economic analysis, could not fail to irritate most of his comrades. Their charges of “technocratism” irked him, and he in his turn could not take seriously their pipe-dreams for an insurrectionary post-war settlement in Europe. There was no basis for the growth of mass revolutionary parties in the conditions of Occupied Europe, and in any case nowadays “a popular revolution which possesses no aeroplanes will inevitably be beaten.” There could be no question any longer of a specifically proletarian hegemony; the “vanguard” must be sought preponderantly within the growing social strata of technicians and white-collar employees. “The education of the working class has to be managed afresh. . . .”

Serge’s reflections on the Western social order are suggestive but often highly ambiguous. He was on surer ground as a commentator upon Soviet perspectives, which he indeed saw as determining the direction of all politics, and especially Socialist politics, in the rest of Europe. He shared none of the current illusions that the Grand Alliance of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin would survive the end of hostilities with Germany. As early as January 1944 we find him noting that “Stalinist hegemony over Europe would not be a liberation but a new nightmare” and that “it would also mark the beginning of the Third World War.” Serge’s last years were increasingly clouded by this prospect of “the permanent war,” anticipated by him at a time when Western politicians often displayed the most grotesque naïvety over Stalin’s intentions. Rarely can his sense of “the appalling powerlessness of accurate prediction” have afflicted him so acutely as when he watched the unfolding of the promised nightmare: Stalinist subjugation of Eastern Europe, extremist demands for preventive nuclear war on the Western side. The letters and notebooks of this period reflect the division of his fears between the threat of Stalinism and the threat of war. It would be possible to excerpt fragments of these sources in such a way as to present either a pro-Western Victor Serge or a kind of “New Left” archetype, repelling both capitalism and Communism with a libertarian disgust. The truth must be that within a man of Serge’s loyalties the Cold War engendered contradictions which he could only express, never surmount.

Serge was convinced that the sources of Soviet expansionism lay in the extreme inner weakness of the social organism underneath the totalitarian armor. In an unpublished essay written in English<sup>6</sup> he observes:



5. Letter to Borie, September 26, 1947. (cf. George Lichtheim’s article in *New Politics*, Winter 1963.)

6. Unpublished MS., *On the Russian Problem* (October 1945).



"The training of a popular revolution who [which] has survived against the worst odds has formed in the governmental circles a mentality of offensive bluff and courageous risk, daily expediency, belief only in force and fact. In the greatest danger the régime will not think of retreat, evolution, compromise, but of an offensive struggle in which compromises are expediency, more apparent than real." In Serge's view the post-war era might evolve along any of three possible directions. If the Soviet system yielded neither to internal nor external pressure, there would be war. Alternatively the régime might back down in the international field while refusing any concessions at home; "war is then postponed, but not removed altogether." Or again, "under the combined pressure of the masses at home and of the international conflicts which will arise in various ways, the régime may try and evolve towards a democratization. Upon the slightest relaxation of terrorist totalitarianism, immense possibilities are opened up, which may cause the emergence in Russia of a socialist-inclined or socialist democracy, and permit a peaceful collaboration with the world outside. The nightmare of war is then removed."<sup>7</sup>

It was in fact this last possibility that aroused Serge's closest interest. His papers and letters refer repeatedly to the idea of something quite odd and unforeseen happening in Russia, which would transform the situation most favorably for its people and for the world outside. Serge is deliberately vague as to what this change might consist of. It is certainly not an anti-Stalinist revolution of the kind advocated by Trotsky. He calls the prospect one of "internal crisis,"<sup>8</sup> "change of régime in Russia,"<sup>9</sup> or of a "great Soviet reform."<sup>10</sup>

This long-term optimism of Serge, which now seems uncannily prescient, arose from the same source as his dark immediate forebodings: from his certain belief, based on long personal experience in Russia, that the terrorist edifice of Stalinism was founded on unendurable social strains, which had been accentuated even further by the ruin of the Second World War. He probably, too, still believed that what he called "the moral capital of the Socialist revolution" had still not been exhausted even by the long years of blood and lies. Serge had been one of the first people (before anybody else, he thought) to use the word "totalitarian" of the Soviet State, but unlike some Western thinkers he did not mean it to imply a finished, impervious, and stable structure, governed omnipotently at the top by considerations of pure power. The detail of his prediction, where there was detail at all, might be fanciful; a few days before he died, he told his son Vlady, "I won't live to see this but you probably will—monuments to Trotsky and to Stalin in the public squares of Russian cities."<sup>11</sup> There is no reason to suppose that he would have regarded the present Russian régime as the "Socialist-inclined or Socialist democracy" of his hopes. Nevertheless, in broad outline and to an astonishing degree, Serge's sense of Soviet reality, of its double-sidedness for

7. Unpublished MS., (no title, no date).

8. Letter to Borie, September 26, 1947.

9. *Ibid.*, April 16, 1947.

10. *On the Russian Problem*.

11. Information supplied by Vlady Serge.

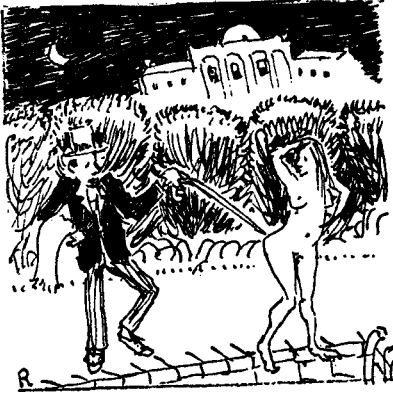
the future as well as for the past, has been justified by the turn that events have in fact taken.

ABOUT VICTOR SERGE'S DEATH, as in his life, there was a retiring quality. He had been in poor health over a number of years, with a record of heart attacks going back to his convict years in France. The high altitude of Mexico City did not suit his condition, and even his long, lyrical excursions into the side country could offer small convalescence after the years of deprivation and persecution. In the middle of 1947 he suffered two attacks of angina. He looked frightfully old and tired, but was optimistic and full of plans. There were offers of publication (for *L'Affaire Toulalév*) from Canada, France, and the U.S.A., of collaboration with Mexican reviews, even of a possible visa for the United States. Early in the small hours of Monday, November 17, he read his wife a poem he had just written. It was a meditation on a Renaissance terracotta of a pair of hands, old and with knotted veins. Serge had tears in his eyes as he read the poem out; the hands symbolized generations of human suffering and resistance, and the knots on them were so like those of his own veins. He went to bed after typing the poem, and had his breakfast around ten the next morning, discussing anthropology with his wife, something about the mystical significance of gold. She had to go to work then; there is no record of the rest of Serge's day until eight in the evening, when he went out to see his son Vlady. He wanted to have a talk about Vlady's paintings, but his son was not at home. He met his friend Julián Gorkín in the street; they talked for a while, and shook hands when they parted. This would be around 10 p.m. Not long after that, doubtless feeling himself ill, Serge hailed a taxi, sank back into the seat, and died without telling the driver where to take him. His family found him stretched out on an old operating-table in a dirty room inside a police station. Gorkín recounts what he looked like: his upturned soles had holes in them, his suit was threadbare, his shirt coarse. Really he might have been some vagabond or other picked up from the streets. Victor Serge's face was stiffened in an expression of ironic protest and, by means of a bandage of cloth, the State had at last closed his mouth.

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# The Profumo Affair In Merrie Olde England



THERE IS SOMETHING TERRIBLY meaningless about the resounding effects of the John Profumo-Christine Keeler scandal. At a moment when the Tories have halfheartedly rallied around their Party, at a moment when they have thoroughly disabused the British public of their special mission to rule, Labor Party politicians have managed to reveal their worst side. Public opinion polls show that were an election held now, the Tories would go down to a smashing defeat—with estimates ranging from a loss on the Tory back bench of between 100 and 200 members in the House of Commons.

In reaction to this, Labor has shown how deeply the ideology of its deceased leaders, Clement Atlee and Hugh Gaitskell, has penetrated the leadership of the Party. "Left wing" Laborites have joined the chorus of "now is not the time to rock the boat" . . . "let's not defeat ourselves by blueprinting the future" . . . "the issue in the Profumo affair is security" . . . "let us embarrass the Government's security arrangements," etc. The *Times* of London has taken the lead in arguing the morality of the Pro-

fumo affair. The Labor press has taken the lead in arguing the security aspects. But no fundamental issue, no authentic dialogue has yet emerged from these scandals—any more than they did over the Vassal case or the Burgess and MacLean affair of some years ago. A system of false alternatives now obtains which is able to provide vicarious pleasures for the English public—a peek at the private morality of the rich. Of course, the simple fact that anyone acquainted with Hogarth's prints or a Dickens novel of an earlier England, "bloody well" realizes that the fact of a Minister of Her Majesty's Government having a film queen for a wife and a trollop for a kept woman is hardly news which ought to rock nations.

It is interesting that the Labor Opposition leader, Harold Wilson, in commenting on the "wages of sin" earned by Miss Christine Keeler, draws an analogy with the earnings of Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, and finally members of the Church of England. Strangely, never once did he allude to the comparison of wages between the "trollop" and the huge working class which undergirds Labor strength. One might say that caution is warranted. But the Labor Party has apparently thrown caution to the winds when it comes to the "security aspects" of a Minister of the Crown sharing a mistress with an emissary from the People's Soviet Socialist Society. Ironically, it is Conservative politicians who are cautioning against any political witch-hunt, while Labor presses home the obvious advantages of an espionage threat.

The brute fact is that Labor politicians have neither the wish nor the strength of will for raising broad social issues involved in the Profumo